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FINAL REPORT OF A MISSION

CARRIED OUT IN LATVIA

FROM 22 TO 26 NOVEMBER 2004

IN ORDER TO REVIEW THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMPETENT
AUTHORITIES WITH REGARD TO THE UP-GRADING OF CERTAIN CLASSES
OF FOOD PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS, ANIMAL HEALTH CONTROLS
AND TO EVALUATE THE OPERATION OF CONTROLS OVER CERTAIN
PRODUCTS OF ANIMAL ORIGIN INTENDED FOR
HUMAN CONSUMPTION

Clarifications provided by the Latvian authorities are given as footnotes, in bold, italic type, to the relevant part of the report.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2. ABBREVIATIONS AND SPECIAL TERMS.....	5
3. BACKGROUND TO THIS MISSION	6
4. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION	7
5. MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	7
5.1. Competent authorities.....	7
5.2. Legislation:.....	8
5.3. Holding registration, movement controls	9
5.4. Animal health controls	11
5.5. Food safety controls	15
5.6. Miscellaneous	18
6. CLOSING MEETING.....	19
7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF LATVIA:	19
ADDENDUM.....	20
ANNEX 1: LEGISLATION.....	21

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Within the structure of the Food and Veterinary Service (PVD), two new Departments have been created dealing with risk assessment, internal audit and training. New legislation came into force on 1 May 2004 which transposed some outstanding Community veterinary legislation.

Evident progress in the registration of bovine, ovine, caprine and porcine holdings in the respective Central Databases (CDB) has been noticed. The Bovine Central Database is able to detect certain input errors automatically. Nevertheless, the maximum delays for movement notification, specified in Regulation (EC) N° 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council and the Commission Regulation (EC) N° 911/2004, are regularly exceeded.

Inspection on farms for animal identification and movement control are carried out by District Veterinary Office (DVO) inspectors. However, the way in which the information available to these inspectors is structured does not allow them to fully implement Commission Regulation (EC) N°1082/2003. Moreover, the sanctions foreseen in Commission Regulation (EC) N°494/98 are rarely applied, considering the large number of late movement notifications which could lead to slow progress in the up-dating of the CDB concerned.

Concerning the eradication programme for enzootic bovine leucosis (EBL), the reported herd incidence varies between the Districts. Several deficiencies in the strategy of sampling and slaughter of reactors were found, which could explain the slow-down of the eradication process. No case of bovine tuberculosis (TB) or brucellosis has been registered during the past four years. However, the interpretation of the TB test does not have a National legal basis and is currently not in compliance with Annex B of Council Directive 64/432/EEC.

Despite endemic rabies and an eradication programme approved by the Commission, no vaccination of foxes in order to control the disease was carried out in 2004. A potential risk of spreading to non protected countries exists.

The contingency plan for Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) will be updated after the transposition of Council Directive 2003/85/EC into national legislation. No monitoring surveillance programme for FMD was carried out during 2004.

The enforcement by the Competent Authorities (CA) of the upgrading process for Transitional Period (TP) establishments was found to be unsatisfactory. The TP establishments visited started their upgrading work very recently and the majority of them are unlikely to comply with the relevant Community legislation by the deadline fixed (31 December 2004).

In the approved establishments visited by the mission team, the CA failed to identify deficiencies regarding structure, layout, maintenance and equipment. The system currently in place does not ensure that only establishments in compliance are approved.

Moreover, the CA did not systematically implement relevant provisions, in particular, with regard to hygiene of operations, operator's own-checks and control on accompanying commercial documents. A certain lack of knowledge on these issues was noted amongst the CA in the Districts visited.

Controls in place are inadequate to ensure that only eligible raw material is accepted into approved establishments.

Non compliant stunning devices were still being used in two slaughterhouses visited.

Overall, even though the CA has taken account of the recommendations of previous missions, the action taken has not resulted in a satisfactory level of compliance in certain areas covered by this mission, in particular, in relation to upgrading of establishments in transitional period.

2. ABBREVIATIONS AND SPECIAL TERMS

CA	Competent Authority
CCA	Central Competent Authority
CDB/SPIDPC	Central Database / State Pedigree Information Data Processing Centre
DVO	District Veterinary Office
EBL	Enzootic Bovine Leucosis
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
HC	High Capacity
HI	Herd Incidence
LC	Low Capacity
OVs	Official Veterinarians
PVD/CCA	Food and Veterinary Service of the Republic of Latvia / Central Competent Authority
TAIEX	Technical Assistance Information Exchange
TP	Transitional Period
TB	Bovine Tuberculosis

3. BACKGROUND TO THIS MISSION

This mission was the first FVO mission in the specified sectors since the accession of Latvia to the EU. Prior to accession, the FVO carried out missions in the framework of the accession preparations, in order to assist and monitor progress with the adoption of the relevant EU requirements.

Following these missions, recommendations were *inter alia* made with regard to the following points:

- To achieve full transposition and implementation of outstanding Community veterinary legislation.
- To review the national upgrading plan, in particular for inclusion on the list of establishments with transitional period in line with the Commission guidelines. To re-evaluate establishments listed as “temporarily closed” without realistic upgrading plans in progress.
- To provide the Commission services with the updated list of establishments as soon as possible.
- To speed up the holding registration procedure in order to avoid any further slippage for the completion of the holding registration, animal identification and movement control system.
- To urgently implement the provisions for sanctions in line with EU requirements, in particular related to Regulations (EC) No 494/98 and No 2629/97.
- To provide the District competent authorities with the necessary information to allow proper detection and follow up in case of non-compliances in the holding registration, animal identification and movement control system.
- To speed up the development of effective traceability systems, so that meat can be traced back to its premises of origin.
- To ensure that methods used for trichinae testing in individual slaughterhouses comply with the EU legislation.

Following these missions the competent authority undertook to take the relevant corrective actions in response to recommendations made.

A Rabies eradication programme¹ for 2004 and an EBL eradication programme² for 2005 have been approved by the Commission Services.

¹ Commission Decision 2003/849/EC; OJ L 322 , 09/12/2003 p. 0016 - 0027

² Commission Decision 2004/695/EC; OJ L 316 , 15/10/2004 p. 0087 - 0090

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION

The objective of the mission was to review the action taken by competent authorities for the upgrading of certain classes of food-processing establishments, animal health controls and to evaluate the controls over certain products of animal origin intended for human consumption.

In pursuit of this objective, the following sites were visited:

COMPETENT AUTHORITY VISITS			Comments
Competent authorities	Central	1	PVD including SPIDPC
	Local	3	Two DVOs and in the third case, the officials were met in the establishments visited.

The table below indicates the number of activities evaluated by the mission team in food processing establishments. One establishment can have more than one activity.

ACTIVITIES IN FOOD PROCESSING ESTABLISHMENTS	Activities in total			
	HC compliance		LC establishments	Total
Now	TP*			
Slaughterhouses (red meat)	1	1	2	4
Cutting premises (red meat)	2			2
Wild game processing	1			1
Meat product premises (red meat)	2			2
Milk processing premises		2		2
Total	6	3	2	11

*TP= Transitional Period

5. MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Competent authorities

Conclusions

The main structure of the veterinary services remains the same. Nevertheless, new Departments dealing with risk assessment, internal audit and training have been created in order to centralise these functions and improve the effectiveness of the structure.

Findings

The PVD is the Latvian Competent Authority (CA) responsible for animal health and welfare control and for control over all food-processing establishments. The PVD is under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture. Twenty-six DVOs of the PVD perform the state surveillance and control functions in specific parts of the territory of Latvia. The DVO controls the performance of the official veterinarians (OVs) and private practitioners authorised to carry out official tasks.

The “Food Control Department” of PVD is responsible for the control of beef labelling from meat establishments to retail shops.

Two new divisions working directly under the General Director of the PVD have been created: the “Research Department”, responsible for risk assessment, and the “Quality and Training Department”, responsible for carrying audits along the chain of command of the veterinary services (e.g. check on the different disease sampling strategy at District level). Within this last Department, a new unit called the “Training Division” has been recently created which is responsible for the creation of a training programme for the official services of the PVD, as well as for food establishment operators in cooperation with the Technical Assistance Information Exchange (TAIEX).

Further information on the structure and functions of the veterinary services are available at: <http://www.pvd.gov.lv> and <http://www.zm.gov.lv>.

5.2. Legislation:

Conclusions

Prior to the accession of Latvia to the EU, a large number of legal acts were adopted which transposed a series of Community veterinary legislation.

Raw milk currently eligible for cheese production is not of the hygienic quality foreseen in Council Directive 92/46/EEC.

The FMD contingency plan has not been updated because Council Directive 2003/85/EC has not been transposed into national legislation.

Application procedures for the full implementation of Commission Regulation (EC) N° 911/2004 are not yet completely defined, leading to major deficiencies described in point 5.3.

Findings:

- Cabinet of Ministers' Regulation n° 85, adopted on 17 February 2004, outlines new rules for the prevention and eradication of EBL, and is directly applicable.
- Cabinet of Ministers Regulation n° 205 on veterinary requirements for the importation of bovine, caprine, ovine and porcine animals and fresh meat from third countries was adopted on 30 March 2004. This Regulation transposes Council Directive 72/462/EC and entered into force on 1 May 2004. Council Directive 2004/68/EC of 26 April 2004 laying down animal health rules for the importation into and transit through the Community of certain live ungulate animals, amending Directives 90/426/EEC and 92/65/EEC and repealing Directive 72/462/EEC³ will be transposed before 20 November 2005.
- Cabinet of Ministers Regulation n° 206 on veterinary requirements for the movement of ovine and caprine animals, adopted on 30 March 2004,

3 OJ No. L 139. 30.04.2004, p. 321; corrigendum by OJ No. L 226, 25.06.2004, p. 128

transposing Directive 91/68/EEC as last amended by Council Directive 2003/50/EC of 11 June 2003⁴, entered into force 1 May 2004.

- Cabinet of Ministers Regulation n° 251 on the circulation of milk and milk products, adopted on 6 April 2004, transposing Directive 92/46/EEC, entered into force 1 May 2004. This national regulation foresees a temporary derogation for the period 1 January 2005 to 1 January 2006 and outlines the criteria for the quality of incoming raw milk used for the production of cheese having the maturation process over 60 days.
- Order of State issued by the Chief Food and Veterinary Officer n° 301 adopted on 15 December 2003 laying down requirements for trichinae examinations, entered into force on 15 April 2004.
- Order of State issued by the Chief Food and Veterinary Officer n° 135 adopted on 30 July 2004, provides instructions for the reporting of the checks on food product labelling carried out by the Districts and entered into force on 1 May 2004.
- The CCA stated that a proposal for the transposition of the Council Directive 2003/85/EC has been submitted to the government for adoption after which the contingency plan on FMD will be amended.
- The Commission Regulation (EC) N°494/98 and Commission Regulation (EC) N° 911/2004 are in force, but the CCA informed the mission team that the application procedures for full implementation were not yet completely defined.

5.3. Holding registration, movement controls:

Conclusions

Evident progress in the registration of bovine, ovine, caprine and porcine holding in the respective Central Databases (CDB) has been noted. The Bovine Central Database software is able to detect the majority of input errors automatically. Significant delays were noted between events and their notification in the cattle CDB. No immediate actions are taken in order to inform and/or to penalize the farmer. A shortcoming in the registration of pig movements has been ascertained by the mission team, leading to uncertainty on the destination of a certain number of animals.

The percentage of inspections on holding registration, animal identification and movement controls varies between Districts (DVO). Moreover, the DVO inspectors do not have the structured information necessary in order to prioritise farm inspections according to risk. Therefore, Commission Regulation (EC) No 494/98 cannot be fully implemented. The number of penalties is rather low in comparison to the high number of late notifications.

⁴ OJ No. L 169, 08.07.2003, p. 51

Findings:

CDB:

The State Pedigree Information Data Processing Centre (SPIDPC)⁵ is the body responsible for the production and distribution of ear tags and animal passports to farmers. They also gather and register information concerning the identification and movements of animals (bovine, sheep, goats, pigs).

SPIDPC is also responsible for the registration of all animal holdings which is obligatory since 1 May 2004. Porcine holdings as well as the majority of bovine, ovine and caprine holdings have been registered in the respective databases.

The following table provide information on animals and holdings situation:

		To 31/12/2003	To 31/10/04
<i>Total number of holdings registered in the CDB</i>	<i>Bovine</i>	0	64737
	<i>Sheep</i>	0	3835
	<i>Pigs</i>	0	2490
<i>Total number of animals registered in the CDB</i>	<i>Bovine livestock</i>	389639	383447
	<i>Ovine livestock</i>	22610	30802
	<i>Pigs livestock</i>	292049	340212

Despite the correct transposition of the definition of a “dealer”, none of them were identified as such, by the SPIDPC.

Bovine and pigs databases assessed by the mission team showed that the information required on animals, holdings, herds, owners and keepers was available. The software used was automatically able to detect input errors such as: date of birth dated “in the future”; ear-tag number assigned to the owner, mother is a female alive recorded on the holding, mother younger than 13 months, calving interval shorter than 210 days, discrepancies between off-movement (from a holding) and on-movement (to another holding). Simulation exercises carried out gave satisfactory results. All Districts visited are connected to the respective databases.

Movement control:

The mission team was informed that for bovine species, 44,9% of births were notified after 27 days and 74,5% of movements were notified after seven days. The notification delays were principally caused by failure of keepers to submit information to SPIDPC on time. The mission team found an example where registration of an animal was notified 9 months after its

⁵ *In their response to the draft report, the Latvian authorities stated that since 1/11/04 the SPIDPC has been reorganised and is now the “State Agency Agricultural Data Centre”.*

birth. The representatives of the SPIDPC stated that in similar cases no immediate warning was sent to the farmer, although it was included in the annual overview report. By checking the pig database, the mission team found a case where ten pigs had disappeared without any indication of movement. It was explained that the pigs had probably been slaughtered for own consumption. Nevertheless, it was not possible to exclude movement of the pigs to other farms.⁶

The Veterinary Inspectorates of the Districts visited conducted a number of herd inspections with a view to evaluating compliance with identification and registration requirements on the spot. An average of 25 % of herds for the 10 first months of 2004 was inspected by the DVO. However, in one DVO visited, the number of herds inspected was under the average for the country (16% of herds visited in 2004). No satisfactory explanation could be provided to the mission team.⁷

The cattle farms that are inspected are chosen by the DVO based on health status and animal movement discrepancies, but not on the other criteria mentioned in Commission Regulation (EC) No 1082/2003.

The SPIDPC sends information to the Districts, on a monthly basis, in relation to deficiencies in animal movement notifications detected by the CDB. This information is presented in table format and is difficult to analyse and/or synthesize and, therefore, has limited practical use for the DVO. In one District visited, despite training received, the representative of the DVO had difficulties explaining data recorded in such tables (44 pages for one month, in the case seen). A new programme, not yet available for the DVO, is being developed by SPIDPC in order to prioritise the risk farms to be inspected.

There is a legal basis for the application of penalties. However, for all of Latvia only 143 movement restrictions and 32 penalties have been imposed during 2004 after animal identification and/or movement infringement.

5.4. Animal health controls

Conclusions

Eradication programmes for TB, brucellosis and EBL have been in place for decades. No cases of bovine TB or brucellosis have been registered in the past four years. However, the herds are not classified as “officially free”. The interpretation of a TB test is different from that laid down in Annex B of Council Directive 64/432/EEC, causing a certain number of doubtful results to be classed as negative.

⁶ *In their response to the draft report, the Latvian authorities stated that according to the state-authorized veterinarian, pigs had been slaughtered for own consumption. In this case a fine was imposed as the owner of the pigs had not notified the SPIDPC accordingly.*

⁷ *In their response to the draft report, the Latvian authorities stated that since 1/5/04 more personnel have been made available to inspect herds in the DVO visited by the mission team.*

The reported herd incidence of EBL for the first ten months of 2004 is 0,15, but in certain Districts it is 0,51. Shortcomings in the programme of EBL eradication (testing regime, delay for reactors slaughtering) were found. Moreover, no tumours suspected of being due to EBL have been examined during the last four years.

Despite endemic rabies and an eradication programme approved by the Commission, no vaccination of foxes took place in 2004, because National funds were not allocated.

A monitoring programme for FMD did not take place in 2004 which will preclude fulfilling the obligations laid down in Article 8 of Council Directive 64/432/EEC. Moreover, the FMD contingency plan has not yet been updated due to the non transposition of Council Directive 2003/85/EC.

Findings

A testing regime is determined in “Animal infectious diseases state surveillance plan of Latvia for 2004” as outlined below:

➤ Testing regime for Bovine tuberculosis (TB):

According to national legislation, all bovine animals from 8 weeks old should be tested annually in holdings, where bovine animals are kept together with animals of other species. Bovine animals in holdings where only bovines are kept have to be tested every two years.

In one District visited, the mission team found that only the thickness of the skin prior to the TB testing was recorded⁸. Moreover, the same District inspector explained that an increase in skin-fold thickness of less than 3 mm at the sites of injection 72 hours after injection of tuberculin was considered as a negative test and an increase of 3 mm or more in the thickness of the fold of the skin was considered as positive. Nevertheless, EU legislation considers an increase in skin fold thickness of more than 2 mm and less than 4 mm to be an inconclusive reaction.

The tuberculin concentration used was 50 000 UE /ml. However, based on the documentation received, it was not possible to confirm whether the standards of the tuberculin used correspond to those mentioned in Annex B of Council Directive 64/432/EEC (pH, concentration of phenol, if any).

➤ Testing regime for Bovine brucellosis:

According to national legislation, all bovine animals from 12 months old (excluding males intended for fattening) have to be tested every two years.

⁸ During the final meeting, the CCA informed the mission team that new recording forms have been recently created.

➤ Testing regime for EBL:

The CCA stated that all bovine animals from 24 months old have to be tested, depending on the average herd prevalence of the previous three years of the District, with the following frequency:

- Every two years in the following Districts (first list): Aizkraukle, Jekabpils, Jelgava, Liepaja, Ogre, Saldus, Talsi, Tukums, Valka, Valmiera and Ventspils.
- Annually in the following Districts (second list): Aluksne, Balvi, Bauska, Cesis, Daugavpils, Dobele, Gulbene, Kraslava, Kuldiga, Limbazi, Ludza, Madona, Preili, Rezekne and Riga.

Based on data provided by the PVD for 2003 and 2004, the mission team found several discrepancies between the herd prevalence calculated for 2003 in several Districts with their distribution in the two lists above. The herd incidence (HI = number of new positive herds / number of herds checked) of the Districts had not been taken into account for distribution in the lists of the testing regime (one District with HI = 0, 11 in 2003 classified in the first list, whilst in the other hand another District with HI = 0,07 is classified in the second list). The mission team noted that for the first 10 months of 2004, the HI for the whole of Latvia is 0,15, but certain Districts reached 0,51. Several herds belonging to Districts classified in the first list have been sampled in 2003 but also in 2004. The cost of the EBL tests was fully borne by the farmer.⁹

Latvian Cabinet Regulation n° 85 foresees the slaughtering of reactors within 3 months following positive serological test results. In addition, all animals over 12 months old kept on the holding concerned have to be tested twice: firstly min. 3 months after the slaughter of the reactor, and secondly just 4 months after the first test. These two tests have to be done within a year after the slaughter of the reactor. Nevertheless, Annex D of Council Directive 64/432/EEC states that the interval between the two serological tests to be “at least 4 months and less than 12 months apart”. Movement restriction remains until both tests return negative.

The mission team noted that the three-month period foreseen in Latvian legislation for the slaughter of the reactor was, in many cases, ignored. For example, in one District visited certain reactors identified in 2002 and 2003 were still present on the farms. It was explained that due to the lack of a legal basis, the DVO has no power to force the farmer to slaughter the reactors within the 3 months foreseen in national legislation. However, when this time limit is exceeded, the compensation is lost for the owner of the sero-positive animal.

⁹ *In their response to the draft report, the Latvian authorities stated that since 1/1/05 the cost of EBL tests are partly borne by the farmer.*

➤ In addition to the testing regime mentioned above:

A test for the above-mentioned diseases must be carried out either 30 days prior to, or 30 days after, the date of its introduction into the herd. In the latter case, the animal must be isolated from other animals of the herd in order to avoid direct or indirect contact with other animals until relevant tests have proven negative.

Animals have to be tested for EBL from 12 months old.

Male animals present on fattening farms recognised “free” from the diseases concerned are not tested. Nevertheless, all certified breeding bulls have to be tested annually for these three diseases.

➤ Epidemiological situation:

The following table indicates the numbers of herds and animals tested as well as the number of positive cases for TB, brucellosis over the last four years:

	<i>Tuberculosis</i>			<i>Brucellosis</i>			
	<i>Number of tested herds</i>	<i>Number of tested animals</i>	<i>Positive cases</i>	<i>Number of tested herds</i>	<i>Number of tested animals</i>	<i>Positive cases</i>	<i>Number of abortions declared</i>
2001	93517	216550	0	93517	210470	0	586**
2002	89233	224159	0	28341	57023	0	622**
2003	80298	225865	0	53280	208135	0	846**
2004*	44929	152471	0	18352	47622	0	766**

*10 first months; **Number of abortions notified to the CDB

The following table indicates the number of investigations carried out in the case of abortion over the last three years:

	Number of abortions declared	Blood samples	Bacteriological analysis of abortion cases (foetus)
2002	622	354	29
2003	846	442	0
2004	766**	385*	2*

* Data for the 9 first months; ** Data for the first 10 months

All analysis results were negative.

The two tables above show that no cases of bovine tuberculosis or bovine brucellosis were detected during for the last four years. However, it was noted by the mission team that all the herds are classified by the PVD as “free” and not as “officially free”.¹⁰ Even though a large number of abortions are declared, not all of these are followed by blood sampling of the mother and/or a bacteriological analysis of the foetus.

¹⁰ During the final meeting, the CCA gave assurances for the correction of the herd’s classification.

The following table indicates the numbers of herds and animals tested as well as the number of positive cases for EBL over the last four years:

<i>Enzootic bovine Leucosis</i>					
	<i>Number of tested herds</i>	<i>Number of tested animals</i>	<i>Positive animal cases</i>	<i>Number of animals slaughtered</i>	<i>Histological analysis</i>
2001	93517	241826	882	984	0
2002	89233	257648	1099	1099	0
2003	80298	231468	678	704	0
2004*	41290	119529	301	364	0
Total	304338	850471	2960	3151	0

*Data for the first 10 months

All suspect tumours found at slaughterhouses during the post-mortem examination are compulsorily notifiable. No histological analysis has been carried out to-date.

➤ Other findings:

Rabies: Vaccination has been carried out in 2002 and 2003, when vaccine baits were distributed in possible abodes of foxes and raccoon dogs. For 2004, no funds have been allocated, by the Latvian Government, for the vaccination despite an eradication programme approved by the Commission. Due to the low number of vaccine baits per km² distributed, 500 rabies cases (all species included) were declared in 2002; 964 in 2003 and 374 for the 10 first months of 2004.

Monitoring programmes: A monitoring programme for detection of classical swine fever has been carried out in 2003 and 2004, both for domestic and feral pigs. The monitoring programme for FMD in 2003 did not include small ruminants. Moreover, FMD monitoring was not included in an animal infectious diseases state surveillance programme in for 2004.

Contingency plans: Most of the disease contingency plans have been updated and approved after 1 April 2004. However, the CCA stated that the FMD contingency plan had been approved in June 2002 and, will be updated after the transposition of Council Directive 2003/85/EC. In the DVO visited, the latest contingency plan versions were available

5.5. Food safety controls

Conclusions

It is unlikely that two of the three establishments in the Transitional Period (TP) visited by the mission team, will comply by the agreed deadline (31 December 2004).

The CCA received incorrect assessments of establishments from the Expert Committee of trained veterinarians. As a consequence, the CCA approved establishments with significant structural deficiencies.

In addition, in all districts visited, the knowledge of the OV's responsible for the supervision of the conditions, which are mandatory for the maintenance of the approval, was not satisfactory.

In one establishment, the lack of compliance was so serious that the CCA withdrew EU approval immediately.

Products produced in approved establishments were not correctly health marked as specified in Community legislation. Commercial documents seen did not include all required information, precluding any meaningful verification of the eligibility of the products. Hygiene controls carried out by the operators and/or the official veterinary services were not fully in compliance with Commission Decision 2001/471/EC. In one establishment visited, no corrective actions were taken, either by the operator or the CA, in order to prevent the use of non eligible raw milk for the production of milk products.

Findings

➤ Establishment upgrading and approval:

There are currently 21 TP milk processing establishments and 33 TP meat processing establishments. According to the Treaty of Accession, the majority (43) are to comply with Community legislation by 31 December 2004. The TP establishments are inspected by the DVO every month, in order to monitor progress with the upgrading plan. Data on these inspections are entered into an intranet system, which is available at Central level. Approval of food establishments is granted by the General Director of the PVD, after assessment of the plant by a Committee of experts, comprising members of various DVOs. Maintenance of the approval is the responsibility of the DVO in whose jurisdiction the establishment is located.

The mission team visited 3 TP establishments. Prior to the visits, the mission team was informed that 2 establishments have ceased activity due to reconstruction. On the spot, it was found that all 3 have begun upgrading activities very recently. However, in 2 Districts visited, it was noted that owing to the slow progress of the up-grading and following the request of the operators, the CA of the DVO postponed deadlines for realisation of the necessary works. One of these establishments may comply by the deadline fixed (31 December 2004). However for this plant, certain deficiencies in the proposed structure were not identified by the CA (such as inadequate chilling rooms).

In one approved integrated high capacity establishment (slaughterhouse, cutting plant, meat products processing plant), several deficiencies in relation to structure, layout maintenance, operational hygiene and equipment were found. The Committee of Experts, in charge of the initial assessment for approval, failed to identify these shortcomings, which resulted in the granting of approval by the CCA. The CA of the DVO in charge of supervision of the establishment was not aware of the importance of the deficiencies present or what occurred after the approval process and did not recognise them during the FVO visit. The CCA accompanying the mission

team recognised immediately the gravity of the situation and committed itself to take appropriate action¹¹. The CCA confirmed that training on these subjects had already been provided.

Both low capacity slaughterhouses visited presented a number of deficiencies relating mainly to structure, maintenance and general hygiene which had not been identified by the CA of the DVO concerned.

The approved cutting plant and meat products establishment visited presented adequate structure, maintenance and layout for its meat products production. However, despite the fact that this plant placed cut meat on the market, the special conditions for the approval of cutting plants laid down in Annex I of Council Directive 64/433/EEC were not fulfilled. In particular, absence of a proper cutting room was noted, as well as crossing of flows of incoming fresh meat and outgoing fresh meat and meat products. The CA had not identified these deficiencies when they granted the approval.

➤ Eligibility of raw materials, marking of finished products:

Carcass meat examined during the mission bore the correct approval number, however, in some cases the health marks were not properly designed (lack of Community initials), illegible or incorrectly placed. In one slaughterhouse visited, one frozen beef carcass did not bear any indication of the month and year of freezing.

The national legislation prescribes a square health mark on products produced in establishments benefiting from transitional period arrangements. However, in one TP milk plant closed for refurbishment at the time of the visit, the mission team found an oval stamp belonging to another approved milk plant. The operator explained that final products produced by his establishment were partly commercialised via the second approved establishment, bearing the square health marks. He stated also that the DVO advised him to use a specific label bearing the registered number of his establishment. However, the reason for the presence of the oval stamp could not be explained to the mission team.¹²

In another TP milk processing establishment, a number of farms supplied milk, for which the quality criteria were not in compliance with the current national rules on total bacterial count and somatic cells count. The management did not inform the CA accordingly, moreover, the CA did not check the analysis results themselves. The non eligible milk was mixed in with eligible milk and used for production.

In one establishment visited, commercial documents, when they accompanied consignments, generally did not indicate the status of the establishments of origin and/or of the incoming raw material. In some cases,

¹¹ Letter received 22 December 2004 confirming satisfactory corrective actions taken.

¹² At the final meeting, the CCA provided additional information and confirmed that a police investigation had been launched.

the code enabling the traceability of the beef meat was missing. Moreover, the CA relied mainly on the information received from the operators.

➤ Operational hygiene and associated health checks:

Hygiene checks in certain cases are carried out either by the establishment or the official veterinary services. However, the frequencies and the type of bacteriological analysis were not fully in compliance with Commission Decision 2001/471/EC. The CCA stated that it was being implemented in Latvia in the near future.

5.6. Miscellaneous

Conclusions:

Shortcomings were found in the way trichinae testing was carried out in several slaughterhouses visited.

Non-compliances were found as regards to the stunning system used in two slaughterhouses visited.

Trichinae examination and epidemiology:

A survey carried out in Latvia showed that 48,8 % of the fox population and 3,2% of the wild boar population were contaminated by trichinella spiralis in 2003. During the last three years, about 63 human cases have been registered.

In the two low capacity slaughterhouses visited, a stereo-microscope (magnification 14 to 40X) was used for the individual examination. The CCA confirmed that the Order n° 301 of the State Chief Food and Veterinary Officer permits the use of either the stereo-microscope or the trichinoscope for the compressive method in both low and high capacity slaughterhouses. In one high capacity slaughterhouse visited, shortcomings were found in the way trichinae testing was carried out using “The Magnetic Stirrer Method for pooled samples”. The concentration of hydrochloric acid was wrong (16 ml of 36% HCL instead of 16 ml of 25% HCL)¹³.

Animal welfare: A single electrode stunner system, not fulfilling the requirements of EU legislation, was seen in two slaughterhouses visited. In one, it was declared to be used. In another, it was declared not to be used for stunning but only as an electrical goad, to move bovine animals. However, it was placed in the stunning box. The captive bolt pistol shown to the mission team, which the manager claimed had been used for stunning, was brand new and showed no trace of having been used previously. The CCA informed the mission team that all establishments had been requested, in writing, to stop using this single electrode stunner system.

¹³ Immediate instruction issued by CCA, in relation to the HCL concentration used for the Magnetic Stirrer Method, has been sent to all DVO.

6. CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 26 November 2004 in Riga with the central competent authorities. At this meeting, the main findings and preliminary conclusions of the mission were presented by the inspection team. The representatives of the CCA took note of these findings and conclusions and expressed their willingness to correct the shortcomings observed.

The CCA also confirmed their willingness to respond to the draft report in English within the normal deadlines instead of awaiting reception of the translated report.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES OF LATVIA:

- 1) To transpose Council Directive 2003/85/EC.
- 2) To update the FMD contingency plan and set up a complete sero-surveillance monitoring programme.
- 3) To define clear procedures in order to fully implement the following Commission Regulations: (EC) 1760/2000; (EC) 1082/2003; (EC) 911/2004; Commission Decision 2001/471/EC.
- 4) To strictly apply Commission Regulation (EC) 494/98.
- 5) To fully implement Annex B of Council Directive 64/432/EEC.
- 6) To ensure that trichinae detection methods comply with EU legislation.
- 7) To ensure that animal welfare rules during the stunning process are respected in all slaughterhouses.
- 8) To reinforce the supervision of food establishments in order to cover all the aspects of Community legislation.
- 9) To ensure that the eligibility of raw material processed in milk and meat establishments complies with the EU legislation.
- 10) To provide supplementary training for the CA in light of the deficiencies identified in the report.

The Latvian authorities should submit an action plan, detailing the actions taken, and planned, and including deadlines for their implementation to address the above recommendations within one month of receiving the final report.

ADDENDUM

In their response to the draft report, the Latvian authorities offered some comments that have been incorporated into the final report. They also indicated the following initial action regarding recommendation number 5:

- “Order of Food and Veterinary Service (No 24, of January 20, 2005) approving Instruction on TB diagnostic comes into force as from February 1, 2005. The Instruction lays down provisions of TB testing procedures according to Council Directive 64/432”.

ANNEX 1: LEGISLATION

LEGAL BASES FOR THE MISSION

European legislation	OJ	Title
Council Directive 64/432/EEC	L 121, 29.07.1964, p. 1977	Council Directive 64/432/EEC of 26 June 1964 on animal health problems affecting intra-Community trade in bovine animals and swine
Council Directive 64/433/EEC	L 121, 29.07.1964, p. 2012	Council Directive 64/433/EEC of 26 June 1964 on health conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat
Council Directive 77/99/EEC	L 026, 31.01.1977, p. 85	Council Directive 77/99/EEC of 21 December 1976 on health problems affecting the production and marketing of meat products and certain other products of animal origin
Council Directive 91/495/EEC	L 268, 24.09.1991, p.41	Council Directive 91/495/EEC of 27 November 1990 concerning public health and animal health problems affecting the production and placing on the market of rabbit meat and farmed game meat
Council Directive 92/45/EEC	L 268, 14.09.1992, p. 35	Council Directive 92/45/EEC of 16 June 1992 on public health and animal health problems relating to the killing of wild game and the placing on the market of wild-game meat
Council Directive 92/46/EEC	L 268, 14.09.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/46/EEC of 16 June 1992 laying down the health rules for the production and placing on the market of raw milk, heat-treated milk and milk-based products
Council Directive 92/102/EEC	L 355, 05.12.1992, p. 32	Council Directive 92/102/EEC of 27 November 1992 on the identification and registration of animals
Council Directive 94/65/EC	L 368, 31.12.1994, p. 10	Council Directive 94/65/EC of 14 December 1994 laying down the requirements for the production and placing on the market of minced meat and meat preparations
Council Directive 97/78/EC	L 24, 30.01.98, p. 9	Council Directive of 18 December 1997 laying down the principles governing the organisation of veterinary checks on products entering the Community from third countries.
Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EC) No. 1760/2000	L 204 , 11.08.2000, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No. 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 July 2000 establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products and repealing Council Regulation EC No. 820/97
Council Directive 2001/89/EC	L 316 , 01.12.2001, p. 5	Council Directive 2001/89/EC of 23 October 2001 on Community measures for the control of classical swine fever
Council Directive 2003/85/EC	L 306, 22.11.2003, p.1	Council Directive 2003/85/EC of 29 September 2003 on Community measures for the control of foot-and-mouth disease repealing Directive 85/511/EEC and Decisions 89/531/EEC and 91/665/EEC and amending Directive 92/46/EEC
Commission Decision 98/139/EC	L 038, 12.02.1998, p. 10	Commission Decision 98/139/EC of 4 February 1998 laying down certain detailed rules concerning on-the-spot checks carried out in the veterinary field by Commission experts in Member States

RELEVANT COMMUNITY LEGISLATION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THIS MISSION

European legislation	OJ	Title
Council Directive 72/461/EEC	L 302, 31.12.1972, p. 24	Council Directive 72/461/EEC of 12 December 1972 on health problems affecting intra-Community trade in fresh meat
Council Directive 77/96/EEC	L 026, 31.01.1977, p. 67	Council Directive 77/96/EEC of 21 December 1976 on the examination for trichinae (<i>trichinella spiralis</i>) upon importation from third countries of fresh meat derived from domestic swine
Council Directive 77/391/EEC	L 145, 13.06.1977, p. 44	Council Directive 77/391/EEC of 17 May 1977 introducing Community measures for the eradication of brucellosis, tuberculosis and leucosis in cattle
Council Directive 80/215/EEC	L 047, 21.02.1988, p. 4	Council Directive 80/215/EEC of 22 January 1980 on animal health problems affecting intra-Community trade in meat products
Council Directive 89/397/EEC	L 186, 30.6.1989, p. 23	Council Directive 89/397/EEC of 14 June 1989 on the official control of foodstuffs
Council Directive 89/662/EEC	L 395, 30.12.1989, p. 13	Council Directive 89/662/EEC of 11 December 1989 concerning veterinary checks in intra-Community trade with a view to the completion of the internal market
Council Directive 90/423/EEC	L 224, 18.08.1990 p. 13	Council Directive 90/423/EEC of 26 June 1990 amending Directive 85/511/EEC introducing Community measures for the control of foot-and-mouth disease, Directive 64/432/EEC on animal health problems affecting intra-Community trade in bovine animals and swine and Directive 72/462/EEC on health and veterinary inspection problems upon importation of bovine animals and swine and fresh meat or meat products from third countries
Council Directive 91/68/EEC	L 046, 19.02.1991, p. 19	Council Directive 91/68/EEC of 28 January 1991 on animal health conditions governing intra-Community trade in ovine and caprine animals
Council Directive 92/45/EEC	L 268, 14.09.1992, p. 35	Council Directive 92/45/EEC of 16 June 1992 on public health and animal health problems relating to the killing of wild game and the placing on the market of wild-game meat
Council Directive 92/46/EEC	L 268, 14.09.1992, p. 1	Council Directive 92/46/EEC of 16 June 1992 laying down the health rules for the production and placing on the market of raw milk, heat-treated milk and milk-based products
Council Directive 92/118/EEC	L 062, 15.03.1993, p. 49	Council Directive 92/118/EEC of 17 December 1992 laying down animal health and public health requirements governing trade in and imports into the Community of products not subject to the said requirements laid down in specific Community rules referred to in Annex A (I) to Directive 89/662/EEC and, as regards pathogens, to Directive 90/425/EEC
Council Directive 93/99/EEC	L 290, 24.11.1993, p. 14	Council Directive 93/99/EEC of 29 October 1993 on the subject of additional measures concerning the official control of foodstuffs
Council Directive 93/119/EC	L 340, 31.12.1993, p. 21	Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993 on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing

European legislation	OJ	Title
Council Directive 96/22/EC	L 125, 23.05.1996, p. 3	Council Directive 96/22/EC of 29 April 1996 concerning the prohibition on the use in stockfarming of certain substances having a hormonal or thyrostatic action and of β -agonists, and repealing Directives 81/602/EEC, 88/146/EEC, 88/299/EEC
Council Directive 96/23/EC	L 125, 23.05.1996, p. 10	Council Directive 96/23/EC of 29 April 1996 on measures to monitor certain substances and residues thereof in live animals and animal products and repealing Directives 85/358/EEC and 86/469/EEC and Decisions 89/187/EEC and 91/664/EEC
Council Directive 96/93/EC	L 013, 16.01.1997, p. 28	Council Directive 96/93/EC of 17 December 1996 on the certification of animals and animal products
Council Directive 98/83/EC	L 330, 05.12.1998, p. 32	Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption
Council Directive 2001/89/EC	L 316, 01.12.2001, p. 5	Council Directive 2001/89/EC of 23 October 2001 on Community measures for the control of classical swine fever
Commission Regulation (EC) No 494/98	L 060, 28.02.1998, p. 78	Commission Regulation (EC) No 494/98 of 27 February 1998 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 820/97 as regards the application of minimum administrative sanctions in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals
Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EC) No. 1760/2000	L 204, 11.08.2000, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 July 2000 establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 820/97
Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1825/2000	L 216, 26.08.2000, p. 8	Commission Regulation (EC) No 1825/2000 of 25 August 2000 laying down detailed rules for the application of Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the labelling of beef and beef products
Regulation (EC) No 178/2002	L31, 01.02.2002, p.1	Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety.
Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EC) No 1774/2002	L 273, 10.10.2002, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No 1774/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 October 2002 laying down health rules concerning animal by-products not intended for human consumption
Commission Regulation (EC) No 1082/2003	L 156, 25.06.2003, p. 9	Commission Regulation (EC) No 1082/2003 of 23 June 2003 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the minimum level of controls to be carried out in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals

European legislation	OJ	Title
Commission Regulation (EC) No 911/2004	L 163, 30.04.2004, p. 65	Commission Regulation (EC) No 911/2004 of 29 April 2004 implementing Regulation (EC) No 1760/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards eartags, passports and holding registers
Commission Regulation (EC) No 1893/2004	L 328, 30.10.2004, p. 55-56	Commission Regulation (EC) No 1893/2004 of 29 October 2004 amending Regulation (EC) No 815/2004 laying down transitional measures as regards exports of milk and milk products pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 174/1999, by reason of the accession of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia to the European Union
Council Decision 90/424/EEC	L 224 , 18.08.1990, p. 19	Council Decision 90/424/EEC of 26 June 1990 on expenditure in the veterinary field
Commission Decision 2004/700/EC	<i>L 318 , 19/10/2004 P. 0021 - 0022</i>	Commission Decision 2004/700/EC of 13 October 2004 amending Decision 2004/280/EC laying down transitional measures for the marketing of certain products of animal origin obtained in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia
Council Decision 90/638/EEC	L 347, 12.12.1990, p. 27	Council Decision 90/638/EEC of 27 November 1990 laying down Community criteria for the eradication and monitoring of certain animal diseases
Commission Decision 91/42/EEC	L 023, 29.01.1991 p. 29	Commission Decision 91/42/EEC of 8 January 1991 laying down the criteria to be applied when drawing up contingency plans for the control of FMD, in application of Article 5 of Council Directive 90/423/EEC
Commission Decision 2000/571/EC	L 240, 23.09.2000, p. 14	Commission Decision of 8 September 2000 laying down the methods of veterinary checks for products from third countries destined for introduction into free zones, free warehouses, customs warehouses or operators supplying cross border means of sea transport
Commission Decision 2001/471/EC	L165, 21.06.2001, p.48	Commission Decision of 8 June 2001 laying down rules for the regular checks on the general hygiene carried out by the operators in establishments according to Directive 64/433/EEC on health conditions for the production and marketing of fresh meat and Directive 71/118/EEC on health problems affecting the production and placing on the market of fresh poultry meat
Transitional measures specified in the relevant Annex to the Act of the Accession of the country		